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Islamic Theology and Extreme Islamist Ideology: Incommensurable Correlation

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Abstract: There always exists the lived Islam, the one has been dominating the spheres of religion, politics, society and culture since its formative period; i.e., the one imagined, cut off from critical reason and history and having been used as the basis of authority. This type of Islam, which Mohammed Arkoun refuted, is nothing less than Muslim traditionalists' Islam – i.e., the one has been developing and growing out their dogmatic readings of revelation and its deterioration into ideologies of dominion. It is the one has been making use of theological (orthodox) doctrines like 'al-Hakimiyah li Allah' (no authority but of Allah) not only as the basis of the religious and political elites' power and control, but also –which is worse – of Islamists extreme ideology. Here, Arkoun notes, such expressions have been taken (still are) as the basis not only of the trueness of Islam, but also of the ideology itself. It all depends on a rigid reading of certain Qur'anic verses. Muslims radicals have always found in them the pretense, arguments; say the justification of their ideology.

This research paper attempts, through a critical analytical methodology, to clarify this matter from the viewpoint of Muhammad Arkoun. It lets Arkoun's ideas circulate through my own analysis, which varies and overlaps following the fluidity of his own methodology. While it does, the comparative mode in it has its own space in certain contexts, which, altogether, form both the theoretical and organizational bases of this paper.

Keywords: Islamist, theology, religious authority, clash of emotions, critique.

اللاهوت الإسلامي والأيديولوجيا الإسلامية المتطرفة: علاقة متبادلة

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المستخلص: هيمن ما يمكن تسميته بـ«الإسلام الحي»على مجالات الدين والسياسة والمجتمع والثقافة منذ فترة تكوينه في الفضاء العربي الإسلامي. ونقصد بذلك الإسلام المتخيل، المنقطع عن العقل والتاريخ النقديين والذي تم استخدامه تاريخيا كأساس أو مبرر شرعي للسلطة. هذا النوع من الإسلام، الذي دحضه محمد أركون، ليس أكثر من إسلام المسلمين التقليديين؛ أي أن الإسلام كان يتطور ويطور قراءاته العقائدية للوحي وفق هذه الحاجات وبالتالي تحول تدريجيا إلى أيديولوجيات للهيمنة. فقد استخدم ولا يزال العقائد اللاهوتية (الأرثوذكسية) مثل "الحاكمية لله" ليس فقط كأساس لقوة وسيطرة النخب الدينية والسياسية، ولكن أيضًا كدافع قوي من طرف بعض الإسلاميين التقليديين (السلفيين) نحو تبني نزعة أيديولوجية متطرفة وعنيفة. في هذا الباب، يرى أركون أن مثل هذه الاستخدامات صارت التعبير المهيمن للأسف، ليس فقط على هذه الأيديولوجية، بل على صورة الإسلام نفسه في عيون الآخر. يحاول هذا البحث وعبر منهجية تحليلية نقدية تبيان هذا الأمر من وجهة نظر محمد أركون وذلك عبر الوقوف على القراءة الصارمة لبعض الآيات القرآنية التي طالما وجد فيها المسلمون المتطرفون الحجة لتبرير نزعتهم نحو العنف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللاهوت الإسلامي، علم دين، سلطة دينية، صراع العواطف، النقد.

Research Problem

Islam today is the religion of about two billion people; most of them occupy a wide belt stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, across Africa, parts of Europe, and Asia. The way these Muslims live think and act is influenced by what the expression 'the oneness of religion' has come to represent in the course of time and on which Muslims' way of life and worldviews do, somehow, rest confidently. It also comes to the idea of the Qur'an as the source of such perception and, in broader contexts, the underlying current for all social and cultural phenomena. Every aspect of Muslims' 'being-in-the-world, from the very little gesture of faith to the way they perceive the world around them or the manner their rulers rule, seems to be invalid except through this concept of 'oneness' (i.e., the absolute truth).

Islam, as all religions and forms of faith, refers directly to the inward observance of God's will and commands; it is from this (Islamic) elementary principle or doctrine of submission to Allah where the term Islam receives its name and finds its meaning. However, "Islam has come to refer also more generally to the whole social pattern of cult and creed which, at least for the pious, follows from or even grows out of the personal Islam of the individual devotee; that is, to the religion in the historical sense" (G. S. Hodgson, 1974, p. 71). This means, at the broadest level, other (political and cultural) forces and influences have always engaged in the making of Islam from outside religion itself, e.g., the struggle for authority, tribal allegiances and the differences among the distinct sub-varieties of Islam. This, not only took (still does) Islam away from its spiritual ethos, but resulted in conditions of failure, relapse and, worst of all, Islamic radicalism.

It is this extreme manifestation of Islam, which this paper deals with, arises and lets Arkoun tackle through his own (modern) mode. On account of his chiefly text-based approach, Arkoun started from the hegemonic Islamic discourse set up by 'the managers of the sacred' (the clergy) and moved on to reveal the weird, distorted and dogmatic readings of the tradition these managers have developed over time. As he did, he remained focused on the transition from the Qur'anic fact into an Islamic one; i.e., the transition from the revelatory oral discourse –God's words, theologically, to their collection into a written corpus. One thinks of him –as I do, suggesting a transition from 'le fait coranique' (the Qur'anic fact) to 'le fait Islamique' (the Islamic fact), which has resulted in 'clôture dogmatique' (dogmatic enclosure) –to use his term. This (fixation of Islamic discourse), in effect, he argues, has allowed, in parts, the deterioration of revelation into an extreme ideology.

Perhaps, Arkoun's perspective allows fresh looks onto the present conditions of such an ideology. From quite early, Arkoun expressed his concerns over its discourse against a backdrop of its faulty, ideological perceptions and speculations. What came (still does) to represent Islam in the view of Muslim extremists was watched closely by Arkoun, in part due to the damage it had already caused to Islam in all its forms (i.e., faith, theory, history, culture and civilization). In our day, these extremists all mirror, through their speeches and actions, the image of an 'alienated', unfavorable religion, which in turn, continues to

bring about negative impact not only on Muslims (i.e., their perception of the 'Self') but also in point of their encounter with the 'Other' (non-Muslims).

Methodology, the Core and Form of View

This paper discusses its subject through Arkoun's own elaboration on Islamic extremism, the ideas he suggested and foresaw, before it gives them my own interpretation (i.e., analysis). This may say something, I suggest, to two parallel trends in my own reading of this ideology. One builds upon his own perspective; this invokes his methodology, methods and outlook of his study. The other examines the contexts in which this perspective takes place and on which it explicitly or implicitly feeds. While it does, it lets me be moved by and move through his own rethinking it as far as it lets me view such rethinking through my own eyes and mind whether I accept or resist it. In parts, such a process takes the aspect of a narrative inquiry —a methodology of (qualitative) research in works this kind. His writings may not always help reflect his speculations and viewpoints unless I correspond to them; i.e., to look into his narratives and see how they ascribe to reality —in terms of their notions, theoretical backgrounds and contents. Here, the image of me is recognized as a reflective observer foreseeing what goes beyond the frame of an artist's painting into the perfect fusion of colors, drawings and expressions so that my feeling about it is based on conscious thought, not on first impressions.

This implies the combinations he used not only at the level of methods, but in regard of the modes of the subject per se, since Arkoun had to deal with the entire Islamic phenomenon from different perspectives. As I proceed forward, my own methodology engages in for my purpose is not only to show how 'Arkoun works on this problem of Islam, but also to show my own way in rethinking his work. Both can be read in tandem sometimes; just as I present his own methodology, so too I project my own, with more or less reflection on them —my methodology becomes a projection of his.

Typically, the range of thoughts on such a topic is always large since they occupy a wide variety of concepts, themes and areas in its realm. What can be easily noticeable is how Arkoun moved his thoughts and moved through them across culture, theology, sociology, anthropology, ethics, history, among many relevant camps in humanities and social sciences. He often did so whilst he evoked the problem of orthodoxy —not just as a descriptor of Islamic tradition rather as a theological doctrine with potential ideological weight. This paper deals with it in implication of the relationship between religion and authority, on one hand, and on the other hand, the Jihadist ideology, which has grown over recent decades to occupy larger spaces in the debate on Islam, both 'East' and 'West'.

Now that I have been perusing Arkoun's works, with more attention to some and less to others as determined by the subject itself, it is how I read his works, which matters most; i.e., how I proceed in my analysis, develop my ideas and organize them. As noted above, this paper lets his ideas circulate through my own writings, whilst it engages others'. In-between them, my methodology varies and overlaps

following the fluidity of his own. It takes a historical-critical aspect or an analytic one sometimes. While it does, the comparative mode in it has its own space in certain contexts, which, altogether, form both the theoretical and organizational bases of this paper.

Introduction

Extremism very often denotes radicalism and fanaticism, though it is a complex word to surround sometimes. So literally to say an extremist is someone who is intolerant of any difference in views, attitudes or positions; i.e., an extremist is an individual who thinks, acts and live upon their single-minded zeal —this is truer as far as the definition involves a religious or political cause. Whenever this involvement is made available, the term takes a religious or political sense. This, again, might explain why an extremist usually invokes, in effect, a centrist or a moderate character. At any case, the term extremism always comes in full reference to an ideology by which one's views, expressions or actions are far outside the mainstream ideologies of the society or its conventional norms.

At any time, instant or space extremism is stressed in the contemporary discussions about Islam — the political Islam, in particular, the binary of a Muslim extremist and a Muslim moderate corresponds, in one way or another, to the distinction between a bad Muslim and a good one. This is not always true in the western context, whether the discussions revolve around politics or religion (i.e., Christianity). Let us admit that far-left politics or far-right politics in the West, for instance, or the, now, growing national fanaticism (white supremacy) are often perceived as extreme ideologies, yet their political agendas don't necessarily presuppose the distinction between the 'bad' and 'good'. It follows therefore that perception of extremism depends not on the ideology itself, rather the mode of perception. The most likely development of this is how certain radical ideologies in the West are less objectionable; furthermore, they often go less notable.

This sort of paradox makes of the dominant view of extremism too anachronistic at first glance. Out of personal zeal, an observer may just say, extremism is an expression of one's beliefs, feelings, actions, perceptions and activities, which altogether define a character far different from the ordinary. But this, in effect, depends, on the observer's own backgrounds and the conditions (of culture, society, politics, e.g.) wherein the observation takes place the definition takes place —this dependence becomes larger in settings of conflict (Muslims vs. Jews, Arabs vs. Kurds, Whites vs. Blacks, communists vs. capitalists, etc.) Eventually, "the labeling of activities, people and groups as 'extremist, and the defining of what is 'ordinary' in any setting, is always a subjective and political matter" (Bartoli & Coleman, 2003). It is an ideological matter as this synoptic argument suggests.

What can be a just, moral or ordinary act for some is unjust, immoral and extreme for others. This system of defining works its way similarly in all contexts of conflict. Defining the term becomes more of a dynamic of conflict engagement, less of a dynamic of definition. This typically applies to all acts of

extremism, even the most severely radical ones. Hezbollah's guerilla-war-style military engagement in the conflict with Israel, for example, is seen not only by the majority of Muslims and Lebanese people, but also by some pro- freedom fighting advocates worldwide as a legitimate act of resistance. For the Israelis and nearly all their western allies, the tactics and actions of this Shi'a Islamist group are the mostly perfect expression of the 'Islamic extremism'. This, surely, extends to the two major Palestinian (resistance) movements of 'Hamas' and 'al-Jihad al-Islami'.

Worthless to mention that the term itself is so dynamic, thus ever changing. It always expresses itself in its changing conditions; the shifts in power, geopolitics, and worldviews usually lead to differences in the perspectives. The world, for instance, looked at the Islamic movement 'Muslim Brotherhood' with less doubt before the Arab Spring; these days, it is on the list of terrorist groups in many countries, most of which are Arab and Islamic ones (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Egypt and United Arab Emirates). This applies also to some of the most controversial figures in modern and contemporary history. Bin laden, once a so engaging fighter, someone who, along thousands of Jihadists, had much financial and military support from the U.S. and Gulf countries in their fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, has become now the source of all evil in the world.

The point I want to make clear at the outset of this preliminary discussion that extremism is a complex phenomenon of its own. Most particular of all, extremists differ considerably in their motives, tactics and the severity of their violent actions. Even so, the potential devastating risk of extremists is less their adoption of violence —which is still a great concern, "but more so the closed, fixed, and intolerant nature of extremists' attitudes, and their subsequent imperviousness to change" (Bartoli & Coleman, 2003). This applies to Muslim extremists in general, and, it is, surely, something that finds some of its roots in the Islamic tradition itself —Arkoun asserted.

I. What is a Muslim Extremist?

It might be difficult to, fully, capture its definition. The most likely acceptable answer, nowadays, is someone "who opposes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs" (Casciani, 2014) or a "religiously motivated militant" (Kenney, 2006, pp. 4-5). It matters less or more, at this point, if the opposition is too severe; i.e., to take a physical aspect (terrorism), or manifests in the form of a radical discourse. In this sense, all extreme actions or activities are potentially atrocious irrespective of their forms, levels of aggression or risk.

Surely, Muslim extremists act in different ways. Some employ violent means —either in the most direct forms of violence (suicide bombings) or through structural patterns, e.g. torture. Others tend to use non-violent tactics. Nonetheless, it can be hard, sometimes, to draw a dividing line between the two for the one reason non-violent ideologies do feed, in consequence, the stream of violent ones. This is not the

only complication of this ideology nevertheless. Some extremists target only military personnel or politicians (assassination) whereas the rest may care less of civilians –even children.

Let aside the differences in the motives behind one's terrorist activity or the backgrounds, a Muslim extremist can prepare and commit violence independently—–i.e., a 'Lone Terrorist' or a 'Lone Wolf' who thinks and acts without any command structure or support from any terrorist group. This is relatively rare; even lone wolf's terror attacks have become more frequent in recent years. Another might embrace affiliation, which depends on largely conventional orchestrated work and stronger sense of conflict engagement.

Usually, the term Islamic extremism appears under the rubrics of Islamism, Jihadism, fundamentalism or radicalism. As mentioned above, it increasingly invokes political Islam. This often happens when the anti-Islam political rhetoric is too strictly extreme (i.e., too ideological) and/ or too ignorant of the non-violent, still the totally engaging political ideology of this movement. Yes, some of its instigators and proponents may tend to have extreme views sometimes (e.g., human rights). However, this is no exception in the political work anyway; far-right ideologies are common worldwide and so are the far-lefts, though such argumentations are still no easy matter.

Once so local or regional, the debate on Islamic extremism has become now a major topic in, almost, all scholarships on Islam. It tends, now, to be more dimensional (i.e., universal) as the discussions go beyond the practices of some extremists against their own communities or state authorities to have a global mode. Part of it is the place it takes in the world geopolitics of today, from one hand, and on the hand, the space it occupies in both the public and academic discourse about interfaith, clash of civilization, co-existence, and human rights thereof. Still more instigating is the horrifying effects this ideology has led to in the world, e.g., insecurity, fear, cultural tension, anxiety, and sectarian violence.

II. The Rise of 'Al-Ossouliya al-Islamiya' as a Structural Phenomenon

As mentioned above, Arkoun had to work on Islamic extremism in the context of Islamic tradition. In his way to explain it, he asserted the forces of what he called 'the institutionalized ignorance' being one of the major factors behind its rise in Islam. Surely, there exist many complications. Observers, any observer, should point out the tyranny of Muslim states, i.e., the oppressive and unjustly severe exercise of power in the Arab-Muslim world –the despotic abuse of authority, and the excessive, blatant sometimes, intervention of the West in the affairs of this world (the Middle East, e.g.), which is a tradition that stretches back to the Crusades. However, Arkoun went quite directly to the Islamic tradition, theology, thought –whatever you call it. In this sense, Islamic extremism becomes the system of ideas by which Muslim extremists have so radically expressed their faith. Let be sure that as such an argument can be literally true as it can be nevertheless misleading.

By this, I mean if we to see in the Qur'an and extremism an inextricable link, there shall arise new serious concerns over the essence of the Holy Book itself. More questions on this ideology now, Arkoun claims, invoke the Qur'an directly –this is also a common trend in the questions on Muslim beliefs overall, their history, culture, etc. Once an observer does so —–i.e., to reduce the problem of Islamic extremism to a single element, factor, dynamic or cause with little or no regard of the nexus among them, they always fall in generalizations, which is, typically, an 'orientalist' aspect, or they reproduce the same old narratives about Islam irrespective of how modern their intellectual character is. This –Arkoun (2012) suggested, helps the issue "get hidden rather than openly confronted." It follows that, still in his terms, "the Qur'an cannot function effectively as a text of constant reference unless its status as knowledge is properly established."

It makes sense as far as reading the Qur'an from this traditional perspective is, in its turn, reinforcing the dogmatic discourse of Muslim (extremist) ideologies; i.e., treating it as the only reference for their actions without the proper examination of its (theological) basis. This explains why Arkoun (2012) urged Muslims and westerner (i.e., non-Muslim) scholars "to put aside all theological discourses about the Qur'an, all exegeses of the text, so as to start with the question on the linguistic and epistemological status of the discourse."

Be it more of a "structural phenomenon" as Arkoun claims (2009, p. 325), he had to address its causes in real terms. As he did, there was a real focus on the problem of theology in Islam that only a diagnosis of its systems might allow 'an effective solution' not only of a radical ideology like extremism but of all the problems of Islam so it can arise a new, a liberal, a humanistic or tolerant. Once again, Arkoun tended to be more critical on Islamic tradition. He seemed to manage the study of the problem with instruments hermeneutic, analytic, historic and comparative, or else it would be invalid, too dogmatic as the ideology itself is. Just as he intended to comprehend it in light of its historical development, so too he emphasized an integrated interpretation of the problem –a sort of modern interpretation that foresees and assumes the connection between extremism and other dynamics (e.g., language, authority and thinking).

Not all this can be borrowed only in part as long as the theological implications of this ideology explains it only within its own (theological) Islamic frontiers. There exist too many external factors, e.g., orientalism, colonialism, political instability across the Arab and Muslim world, tyranny, the Israeli-Arab conflict, altogether, each in its own way, have led to Islamic fanaticism –Arkoun was so clear about this in many of his writings. The study he offered still has an element elaborative; it was colored by different thoughts and followed many methods to give "a new conceptualization of the situation in which Muslims are today" (Arkoun, 2012). Nonetheless, it was important to distinguish which part is important and which is not at this stage of the study at hand (i.e., my thesis).

Arkoun's work on extremism can be perceived in different ways; it typically depends on one's own position, standpoint or motives. The judgment can be, relatively, too subjective, therefore less objective sometimes. This is true of all scholars, Westerners or Muslims, modernists or traditionalists, conservatives or liberals, capitalists or socialists, moderates or extremists, etc. What I find unique though about Arkoun is that he was among the few contemporary Muslim scholars –in particular, who managed well to think of the problem rather than to talk about it, who seriously wanted the issue to be openly confronted rather than be hidden. Perhaps, the most likely development of his disposition to confront is in his own claim, "this text or discourse that we call the Qur'an was made sacred, and is made sacred, through a historical and social process" (Arkoun, 2012). It would be a mistake not to realize how revolutionary such a claim is if we bring its transformative power to the foreground. It not only implied some sense of human agency in the process of interpretation, but also, in effect, invoked the idea of revelation per see.

At any case, Arkoun mostly discussed Islamic extremism under the term 'al-ossouliya al-Islamiya', which refers in Arabic to 'Islamic fundamentalism' –the term 'al-ossouliya' may have a broader significance in other contexts. The basis of its semantically magnetic power is, perhaps, on which Arkoun had to forge a link between the term and extremism. In other words, extremism, as both a theory in Islam and an ideology, finds its roots in the significance the word 'asl' (origin) has had in tradition –we have to remember that the two terms 'asl' and 'taqlid' (i.e., tradition) sometimes overlap. In all traditional religious perspectives, what counts as authentic or original about Islam is what it is religiously legitimate and conversely true. What is both is what is past. By assuming this, the problem of extremism in Islam tends to be a historical one; "Muslim extremists act within proper conditions that were made suitable long centuries ago" (Arkoun, 2009, p. 327). I.e., what observers find right about this ideology today has its basis, somehow, in the past as far as the ideology itself is but one of the expressions of Islamic orthodoxy, if not its prominent outlook. Once again, Arkoun (2009) affirms, "if we study properly and systemically this past, we shall realize well that Islam's current issues and problems, which we all suffer, have their origins in those dark ages we all have lived in, yet unable to leave" (p. 327).

III. The Indoctrination of Islamist Extremism through the Religious Concept 'No Authority but of Allah'

This viewpoint of Arkoun opens the possibility for a more reasonable understanding of this ideology. Just as it makes of it a historical problem, so too it explains how it evolved. It seems not to embrace the informative mode of the study, rather the analytical/critical one –this is as true about the view as it is so about Arkoun himself. One of the things Arkoun concluded was how Muslim extremists make the use of certain theological (orthodox) formulas such as 'Islam is din al-Haq' (Islam is the true religion or the religion of truth –whatever you call it) or 'la hukma illa li-Allah' (there is no power but

God's). Such expressions have been taken (still are) as the basis not only of the trueness of Islam, but also of the ideology itself. It all depended on a rigid reading of certain Qur'anic verses. Muslims radicals have always found in them the pretense, arguments; say the justification of their ideology. To them, the Qur'an says it all:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - fight until they give the 'jizyah' willingly while they are humbled" (Qur'an 9:29).

More so, their reading of such verses constitutes a regime of truth, by which their authority has supports from the Qur'an. This is so true about, almost, all radical Islamic groups, past and present. Among the many examples, I found it more helpful to draw upon the term 'al-hakimiyah li Allah' (no power or authority but of Allah) in Sayyid Qutb's ideology. Why Qutb? This is a question, to which I respond, it is made none the difficult by the popularity of his views among radical Muslims —whether he was "the man who inspired Bin Laden" (Irwin, 2001) or not, this Muslim fanatic scholar's ideology has been in the core of Islamic Jihadism over recent decades.

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husain was born on October 9, 1906 in the village of Musha in the Upper Egypt's province of Asyut to a middle-class conservative family. At a very young age, he learned about melodic citations of the Qur'an, different world literatures, e.g., Sherlock Holmes stories, A Thousand and One Nights as well as about different texts in astrology, magic, poetry. Just as this juxtaposition of books fueled the literary and artistic side of his personality, so too his father's regular discussions of Egypt's politics fueled the intellectual and political side. This is what made of him an author, a literary critic and a political activist, at a certain point of his life, before his character began to take the aspect of an Islamist theoretician.

Qutb grew up in British-occupied Egypt; amid significant changes in the socio-cultural fabrics of the society and growing struggle for power among different political forces; pan-Arab nationalists, secularists, traditionalists, royalists and others —the most likely impact of this was the changes in his own thoughts, positions and endeavors throughout his life. He came from a devout rural background, but studied Western literature, literary criticism and was too conscious of the dialectic between modernity and tradition in Egypt —in terms of its socio-cultural and political influence on the Egyptian society. Then came what made of Qutb 'the man behind Bin Laden', 'al-jama'a al-islamiya' (the Islamic Group) in Egypt and nearly all Jihadists of today's time.

A two-year stay in the United States, and by personal and objective motives —whatever they were in his mind— marked a radical 'more-of-a-rift', 'less-of-a-shift' in his personality. Surely, Qutb loathed the experience for reasons, yet, not definitely known —observers usually point out the excess of materialism, segregation and individualism in the American society. As he got more critical of it, this was instigating a determined Islamist fundamentalist. He joined the largest Islamic revivalist group 'Muslim Brotherhood' of

Sheikh Hassan al-Banna and it was not too long before he started to open a new, yet a more dramatic and violent chapter in the mass Islamist group's struggle for power against the regime of the pan-Arab nationalist Gamal abdel Nasser.

Sayyid Qutb spent about ten years in prison — it ended with his execution on August 29, 1966 in Cairo. While in prison, he was rethinking both his political and his observations of his own faith (Islam), which culminated was in his two widely read books 'Ma'alim 'ala al-Tariq' (Milestones) and the Qur'anic commentary 'Fi Zhilal al- Qur'an' (In the Shade of the Qur'an), now are the most influential Islamist tracts ever written. So clearly in Milestones, Qutb preached Jihadism or the 'Islamic holy war. He took in the expression 'al-hakimiyah li Allah' (There is no authority but of Allah) in a way proved, now, to religiously legalize (i.e., to legitimize) violent Muslims' resistance to the regimes in their countries, and worst still, to feed their intolerant ideologies towards outsiders (i.e., non-Muslims).

The book, now, is perhaps, an oversized pamphlet, full of typos, devoid of notes or any sort of introductions. It can also be banal, repetitive and uninspiring for an average reader. However, it still keeps much of its instigating power in the eyes and minds of most Muslim fanatics; "it remains the essential charter of the jihad movement -- its Mein Kampf" (Raban, 2002). It reflects "a move on the part of Sayyid Qutb towards radical Islamism", "a move", in Algar's view, "was caused partly by the ideological influence of Maulana Maudoodi and partly by the unfolding of events in Egypt" (Qutb, 1949/ 2000, p. 17) of his time. By far, this book definitely count among 'the historic documents of the contemporary Islamic movement' as far as Sayyid Qutb, who, some fifty-four years after his death, is still the most influential pioneer and ideologue of this movement (Jihadism) across the Arab and Muslim world.

Again, Qutb's influence on Islamic extremism is clear and so is the image of a truly Islamist demagogue. Whether the ideology he adopted came out of the hardships of his own life in prison, his emotional struggle for self-realization and fulfillment or out of blatant malfunctions of his mind, it took advantage in many theological instruments and doctrines, e.g., interpretation monopoly. He was highly critical of the present conditions of Islam, surely not in the modern perspective of the concept 'critical', but in the sense of reintegrating Islam into its traditional conditions. He was a devout believer in the legal essence of Islam as much as in its dominion bringing together the literal interpretation of the Qur'an and Traditions and the authority of the clergy (i.e., orthodoxy). This, again —Arkoun always affirms, shows how biding has been the fixation of the Islamic discourse and its circumscription, how powerfully the dogmatic reading of Qur'an —in particular, has operated to deteriorate Islam into too extreme (orthodox) ideologies as of Qutb's.

It might always come to Jihad, the 'holy war' by which the fantasies of Qutb should come true as his instigators and proponents constantly claim. Jihad, the concept, which still functions, in this religious traditional perspective, as a dividing line between 'Dar al-Islam' and 'Dar al-Harb' and whose aims —Qutb asserted, is to destroy the tyrannical forces and regimes or "the laws of a government which is founded on

man-made theories" (Qutb, 1962/2002, p. 150) arguing that the cause of God is to "establish His order and way of life in the world" (Qutb, 1962/ 2001, p. 224).

This aside, there exist speculations on many of subjects in his works, e.g., women in Islam, family, Jews, society, democracy, but none of them seem to have any significance except the rigid (traditional) mode of their elaboration. They, altogether, make sense only within the theological frontiers of Islamic tradition (i.e., thought), which Muslim extremists, these days, take them for the limits of the whole Islam. By far and all, today's Muslim extremist ideologies are not only refined adaptations of his, but, above all, expressions of the Islamic structural problem which Arkoun intended to fix by the reconceptualization of both the Qur'an and Traditions —i.e., rethinking Islam.

At any case, the notion of a true religion has always served the political legitimacy of Muslim rulers, Muslim states and almost all religiously-engaging political affiliations (e.g., Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt) as far as the basis of power or authority across the Arab-Muslim world has always been on the claims to the 'one' truth. Each sect, branch or school of Islam has employed the very Qur'anic notion of 'din al-haq' vis-a-vis the rest and in service of a particular group or side. The nexus of the two (religion & authority) is evident in Saudi Arabia, for instance; the legitimacy of Saudi ruling monarchy still depends, to a large extent, on the Wahhabis' support. The same is true about the 'Taliban' Movement' struggle for power in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Surely, extremism feeds on other streams as well these days. The ideology benefits, in parts, from the power vacuum or power void in many Arab and Muslim countries, e.g., Libya, Syria and Iraq, which Islamists groups always rush in to fill. Yet, it is the force of tradition that gives it real advantage. Muslim extremists still make the use of certain traditional (theological) slogans or maxims, notably 'al-hakimiyah li Allah'. The propagation of these expressions —the type of 'what is a true faith and what is not', 'who is a faithful and who is an infidel', is among the strategies by which these extremists exert their power, if not the only one.

An infidel is an infidel and a faithful is so by the virtue of the Qur'an, hadiths or the clergy. This is, in effect, the basis of Muslim extremists' ideology, on which they build all their doctrines or claims to power. In this sense, it is a rigorous and narrow-minded one; worst still, it represents 'a fait accompli' in/of Islam – to use Arkoun's terms.

I might drag the discussion into the problem of Islamic reason —as Arkoun did. If we brought the idea of 'absolute truth' to the side, the ideology should lose its support; Islam itself would open for more democratic, liberal and, most essentially, tolerant (humanistic) meanings. Until then, "all what happens in front of our eyes in Algeria, Egypt, Afghanistan or Pakistan is, by all means, completely understood and should not raise any odd speculations" (Arkoun, 2009, p. 329). There still a exists an Islamic reason, a too scholastic (medieval) one, which takes advantage in Islamic tradition, picks up its dogmatic and orthodox elements, to reason the adoption of violent ideologies. It is a jurisprudential reason, 'aql fiqhi (juristic mind) —in Mohammed Abed al-Jabri's words, "whose genius was and still is, almost, bound to the search

for an origin to each branch, hence an old for each new in the (Islamic) text, only to be measured by and through its referential authority" (2009, p. 105).

IV. Mobilizing the 'Clash of Emotions' in Service to Ideology

Arkoun went further to question the dialectic relationship between this (Islamic) reason and emotion. For him, Muslims often think, act and react emotionally rather than rationally. This is true —he assumed, for the simple reason beliefs, all beliefs, in fact, do belong to the sphere of emotion, not to that of rationality. The development of such an idea had an element personal. It goes to his own words:

When, at an early age, I was a secondary school teacher, in a lycée near Algiers, I used to assume the idea of divine authenticity of the Qur'an. Afterwards I wrote an article on this concept, which I presented in a festschrift to my teacher in philosophy when I was in Oran. My teacher challenged this idea asking: how can God —who defines himself as invisible, eternal and mysterious — be considered to speak? I admit this was the first time I recognized its problematic character. I had simply assumed, like all Muslims, that God speaks. I recognized this belief as a mental obstacle in myself. It is still a prevalent belief (Arkoun, 2012).

Eventually, the postulate is that Islam builds on reason somehow. This is true at certain instances, but surely not always. What the Islamic narratives usually bring about is more of 'l'imaginaire' (the imaginary), less of 'le rationnel' (the rational). "We make a big mistake when we take the religious postulates to be postulates of reason whilst the religious discourse is built out of l'imaginaire, and l'imaginaire is always aligned to emotion rather than rational thought", —says Arkoun (2012). This applies to the ideology of extremism. At any time, instant or space a Muslim extremist thinks or acts, they usually do upon their own emotions, not their reason. They may tend to argue rationally. Yet, very often, the argumentation helps only silence or alienate their emotions —i.e., their imagination. When Al-Qaeda or ISIS' members invoke the idea of 'al-dawla al-islamiya' (the Islamic State), for instance, this refers to nothing reasonable, evident or practical in the conditions of present time. The argument is too blatant, cut from even a bit of reasoning, and furthermore has no grounds in today's reality except its assertive (emotional) power.

The sequel to this can be in the French analyst and political scientist Dominique Moïsi's 'Geopolitics of Emotion; a scintillating essay in which this brilliant professor explores the impact of the potent emotions of fear and humiliation on the making of today's world order. After all, Muslim extremist are human beings with bundles of emotions whose violent ideologies are, to an extent, reflections of clashes of emotions (e.g., Islamophobia) today's world disorder has forged. We should remember that the immediate reactions to terrorist attacks, offensive anti-Muslim remarks, which always work their way to the Media, speeches of hatred or policies against Muslim minorities, altogether, have the potency to outrage violence among Muslims.

What Arkoun did not appreciate –and he was far from alone in this, is that these complications remain unthinkable (i.e., unthought-of) in the study of Islamic extremism. It would be hard to study it in a resolute manner –he concluded, unless its complexity is recognized. Part of it is a structural problem; observers may point out a number of drawbacks: the orthodox nature of Islamic reason, the excess of irrationality, the interpretation monopoly, the overwhelming dialectic of modernity and tradition, etc. Arkoun's firm belief is that Islamic extremism is, by far, reflection of severe distortion in Islamic (traditional) thought. Muslims generally still undermine this, which is something the ideology feeds upon somehow. Its religious discourse still supposes an authority monopoly which speaks about the 'absolute truth', therefore, there remains a sorely need to reverse the discourse itself –i.e., 're-experiencing the Qur'an' as a text that brings about devotional love to God, moral obligation towards all people and the praise of the spiritual ethos of Islam, but not (dogmatic) restraints.

Beyond this, there is also the tension in the relationship between the 'Self' (i.e., Muslims) and the 'Other' (i.e., non-Muslims), which eventually puts more strains on the evolving religious and cultural encounters between the two (Islam and the West). This is another backdrop of its own. Let us admit that the Western narrative about Islam, in general, still does not address it resolutely and effectively, furthermore, it serves no change in the perspective nor in the state of existence (reality). Surely, the 18th-century Europe saw the breakdown of nearly all traditional structures in thought. However, much of what had shaped Western imagination about Islam in previous eras, –i.e., a wide array of orientalist and medieval conceptions, have by no means totally disappeared. On its part, Islam itself has neither, yet, escaped the traps of orthodoxy, nor has done the religious discourse. Consequently, the two sides continue to suffer the impact of their own misconceptions and misrepresentations, and the outcomes are far from certain unless "the Islamic system –of thought – begins to see and study what happens outside its own circles" (Arkoun, 2009, p. 325), and, in parallel, the western discourse on Islam engages in the process in real terms. Surely, "there is a whole spate of books nowadays by sociologists or political scientists in the West talking about fundamentalism. But this present-minded approach sheds no light on the real issue, which requires long-term, historical analysis with the right tools" (Arkoun, 2012).

Mohamed Abed al-Jabri's speculations of the subject might be relevant to this. The tension between Islam and the West depends, in parts, on what he calls 'the double role of the 'Other'. As a synopsis, al-Jabri's claim works well to give an overview of the link between the two, in the sense both are historically interdependent. "The first Arab-Islamic Renaissance had had to rid itself of the opposing disturbing Other before it actually began to set itself free within its own vital and vast space, and before it went on to exert its power over more vital areas in the East, West, South and North, to gradually merge them all into its own" (al-Jabri, 2010, p. 24-25) Just as this is true about Islam as it is about the West since –he further explains, "The rise of the modern European Renaissance during the 12th and 13th century coincided with the beginning of the serious decline of the Arab-Islamic civilization" (2010, p. 24-25). In the

process, each establishes its own 'mechanism of defense' —to use his term, i.e., "a system by which the Self normally closes up on its own in the face of external danger or threats" (2010, p. 26) leading, in effect, to more cultural and religious enclosures. Once again, this is true about the two though it takes a clear theological (religious), less of a cultural aspect in the Islamic context. By this I mean, Muslims' passion about their past (history), is, in its core, a (subconscious) search of protection from the hostilities of today —which the West, somehow, represents in different ways, e.g., imperialism, secularism, cultural alienation.

It follows that a radical Islamic ideology vis-à-vis an anti-Islamic western discourse having an adverse effect on both sides. Each (side) acts and reacts upon the other's actions and reactions, which is the condition by which mutual disrespect, emotions of displeasure, indignation and violence triumph. It sound true then to correspond again to Louis Althusser's idea that "the ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production" (Althusser, 1970/2001, p. 85).

This might evoke the concept 'Karma' as long as the actions of Muslim extremists in these and previews conditions viewed as deciding the reactions of the West and conversely true. This happens always on the psychological basis of cause and effect (stimulus and response) —a dimension which Arkoun intended to bring into the study of Jihadism.

Surely, Islamic extremism is an ideology of carnage; by no means, it can be tolerated or justified. Nevertheless, it should be fully explained at the theoretical level to see how it builds its own structure, functions and evolves; thereby the study as well as the resultant applied strategies work for its defeat not otherwise. Part of this process —Arkoun engaged in, is to shed brighter lights on the discourses this ideology feeds upon. Just as these extremists act violently, show so much disfavor of non-Muslims and propagate a narrative of hatred towards the West overall, so too this ideology, fuels, in turn, anti-Islam demagogy and propaganda. In other words, just as the Western discourse suffers the dominion of an old orientalist, medieval mindset —'Islamic cultures are dysfunctional and counter-modern', so too the Islamic (radical) one suffers the magnetic power of (orthodox) tradition.

Anyway, with regard to Islam, this tension has an element both historical and theological. Over the course of time, Muslims' way of thinking (i.e., Islamic reason) has grown to a double-sided measure; it has known two opposing, if not confronting forces. Just as one exerts its power toward subjecting this (inferior) reason to the supreme, dominant, all-knowing mastermind of Allah, so too, and in a tandem patter, the other gives it a dominant (superior) status, which, in effect, leads Muslims to think, act and live upon their sense of dominion over non-Muslims. This, in its turns, operates in a two ways: the inferior feeds more self-decentering —i.e., disfavor, reprehension and disparagement of the human intellect, whilst the superior feeds the idea of belonging to the 'true religion'.

Such a measure not only distort reality, but also reproduces it, in effect. This might correspond to the Algerian-born French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser's concept of a heroic or worshipful image of ideology by which one's view of the Self, thus of the Other reproduces within itself the same

view. The way this reason operates depends much on what these two forces have come to represent theologically. The significance of what is in-between them imparts the 'theological' distinction between those who submit to the will of God and obey His commands and those who not. By saying this, we suppose Muslim extremists make use of the division between 'Dar al-Islam' (the land of Islam), in which they find themselves right and 'Dar al-harb' (the land of war), in which the find the others wrong. As they do, the idea of 'the true religion' emerges to satisfy their exaggeratedly favorable impression of Islam and the 'Muslim Self' —i.e., the faithful and obedient, from one hand, and on the other hand, an unfavorable (intolerant) view of non-Muslims. Worse still is how the idea feeds the ideology of violence and hostility towards those who are different, they be Christians, Jews, infidels, outsiders thereof.

All this makes sense only within its theological context for the idea itself —Islam is the religion of truth — has always built on a rigid (orthodox) reading of the Qur'an; this is, in fact, its only backdrop. To these Muslim extremists, the Qur'an puts it the way it fits their religious standpoints as long as it always reads:

You are the best nation produced as an example for mankind. You enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient (Qur'an 3:110).

Surely, these words can open for various and more tolerant interpretations from a modern perspective, yet Islamic thought remains vulnerably incompetent and powerless to take in this openness. Until Muslim scholars converse at this level, rescue all strands of thought from orthodoxy —as Arkoun intended to do, this type of reading as much as the ideology behind it would be "the ultimate refuge of the powerless" —to borrow Roger Cohen's remark in his article 'The Captive Arab Mind' (2010).

So there it is. This ideology is, in part, an expression of captivity. The Islam reason still cannot operate outside its theological frontiers. The implausible and wild-eyed narrative it embraces still takes the vision of orthodoxy, of tradition and the past for its own. As Arkoun (2009) remarks, "this is the big challenge Muslims and Islamic societies have, and surely the issue of tolerance vs. intolerance is a significant part of it; it is a part of these accumulations that are impossible to think about" (p. 234).

This, in no way, exhausts the influence of other factors, especially in the present conditions, rather emphasizes the structural aspect of the problem. Muslims, in general, are still held captive to an 'enclosed doctrinal apparatus' without which not only the Qur'an and Traditions would open for liberal and tolerant interpretations but would also help Islam arise anew. Muslims still think, act and live under the weight of what Arkoun (2009) calls "the guardians of the official religious orthodoxy" (p. 232). This is due, in most parts, to the fact that "Islam —as a concept, religion and an ideology, has not yet undergone a real historical critique to unearth this dominant orthodoxy" (p. 236).

Surely, Arkoun's breadth in the study of Islamic extremism can hardly be overestimated; it discussed it in all its dimensions; by doing this will be seen all the knowledge layers, which have been

compressed by orthodoxy, therefore will emerge a new meaning of Islam. Arkoun had to give the study a comparative method. He had to see in Christianity, for example, what might correspond to Islam in point of the 'religious reason'. In this sense, the West could not rescue the strands of its thought towards more liberating, enlightening and humanistic norms, before it set itself free from the dominion of the theological discourse (tradition). By the turn of the 18th century, Christians, in general, became religiously free in the sense that "Christianity became nearly a personal or individual matter" (Arkoun, 2009, p. 236) I.e., it devolved to "a saintly high religious shiver" (p. 237) or "the human experience – assimilation – of the divine" (Meslin, 1988).

This shift in the perspective of Christianity was, in effect, one of the major achievements of the Enlightenment; it represented its modern intellectual and philosophical aspirations as manifested in the transformative power of rational thinking. It was more of an 'epistemological break' –in Arkoun's terminology, which he definitely embraced. The crisis of Islam, past and present, strongly shows that the Islamic reason has not operated yet in this (western) modern mode. It still retains and exerts its confining power whilst it assures the interest of the clergy only and the ruling class rather religion itself. Even worse, this reason, sometimes, allows the adaptation towards a pervasively oppressive ideology (i.e., extremism).

Nothing causes vengeance and violence or appreciates intolerance worse than the (medieval) religious zeal which orthodoxy instigates. Lest this be confronted, radical ideologies would always have advantage. People suffer because of their differences. This happens when the dominant discourse is too dogmatic and radical, hence intolerant. Is it the fault of religion? Surely, it is not. It is the problem of reading, i.e., mono-interpretation of revelation. This is, nowadays, true about Islam that "we cannot talk about tolerance in Islam –in the modern sense of the word" (Arkoun, 2009, p. 240) Arkoun affirms, and so was it about Christianity in the past that someone like John Lock had to pose a similar question:

Is this the fault of the Christian religion? If it be so, truly the Christian religion is the worst of all religions and ought neither to be embraced by any particular person, nor tolerated by any commonwealth. For if this be the genius, this the nature of the Christian religion, to be turbulent and destructive to the civil peace, that Church itself which the magistrate indulges will not always be innocent. But far be it from us to say any such thing of that Religion, which carries the greatest opposition to Covetousness, Ambition, Discord, Contention, and all manner of inordinate Desires; and is the most modest and peaceable Religion that ever was. (Locke, 1689/1983, p. 54).

Just as Lock believed that 'the toleration of the 'Other', who differs from the 'Self' in matters of religion, is so agreeable to Christianity and to the 'genuine reason of mankind', therefore, "we must seek another Cause of those Evils that are charged upon Religion" (Locke, 1689/1983, p.54), so too Arkoun thought it was so agreeable to the Qur'an – "And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed –all of them entirely. Then, O Muhammad, would you compel the people in order that they become believers?" (Qur'an 10:99).

Arkoun hold this possibility only if Muslims can re-experience it (the Qu'ran) in a modern mode; i.e., bringing together the original (spiritual) Qur'anic revelation and the genuine reason of humankind as manifested in the social, scientific and philosophical speculations and insights of modern age, which have, he asserted, long been obscured, abandoned or unthought-of. If this be not done, there can be no end put to such an ideology of/in Islam. It is this idea of renewal, reconceptualization or reformation –whatever observers call it – that would help Islam retrieve its modern, liberal, tolerant or humanistic essence (form), he says.

Conclusion:

Whenever Islam is a subject of study, there always emerge troubling questions, let alone wrong speculations sometimes about it. Muslim and Western (i.e., non-Muslim) scholars often come to grips with varied notions, shapes, systems, demonstrations and so on. This happens, in part due to its own divergent nature, as it has grown with varied, often, ambiguous or elusive meanings, and in view of the space it has occupied hitherto in the world. Evenly, these studies usually bring about confusions. Despite Islam has now settled across the globe, most Muslims and non-Muslims still do not have a clear idea of what Islam entails or –which is worse –think, act and live upon false conceptions. This says, something, to some Muslims preaching radicalism and violence.

This viewpoint of Arkoun opens the possibility for a more reasonable understanding Islamic radicalism. Just as it makes of this ideology a historical problem, so too it explains how it evolved within the confines of theology. One of the things Arkoun concluded was how Muslim extremists make the use of certain theological (orthodox) formulas, e.g., 'Islam is din al-Haq' (Islam is the true religion or the religion of truth –whatever you call it). In our day, such an ideology seems to create its own cycle, which brings more complication to the problem of violence in Islam. Here, again Arkoun notes, inasmuch as these extremists act violently, show so much disfavor of non-Muslims and propagate a narrative of hatred towards the West overall, so too this ideology, fuels, in turn, an anti-Islam demagogy and propaganda.

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